

MEMORANDUM FOR: Ted Atkeson, NIO/GPF

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# BRITAIN 'BLIND TO SOVIET SEA THREAT'

By DESMOND WETTER, Naval Correspondent

The Daily Telegraph

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THE strength of the Russian Navy has increased in 10 years by 27 per cent, and according to Adm Sir John Fieldhouse, First Sea Lord, the Russians have shown they "understand the implications of sea power" which the West has ignored.

The British people had been "travelling through a period of misguided unconcern" about the continuing importance of the sea, Adm Fieldhouse told an Anglo-American seminar on the Russian maritime threat.

Europeans had been "going through a period of sea blindness," he added. He was speaking at the Royal United Services Institute.

He believed that "faced with a strategic balance on the ground in Europe, that would be dangerous to disturb, and with problems elsewhere, a global maritime policy is increasingly attractive for the Russian leaders."

Naval forces could provide political leaders with a presence abroad that, like the larger commercial, "could reach parts that other forces cannot reach, and its intentions could be benevolent or malign."

## Soviet cruise missiles

The Russian Navy's expansion was " remorseless" and made with deliberation and intent, he said, citing as an example THE DAILY TELEGRAPH report (Feb. 8) of the permanent patrols of cruise missile-armed submarines that the Russians have established off the American Atlantic coast since last autumn.

Adm Fieldhouse said he believed the Russian Navy would have three aims in war: To keep the American carrier task groups at bay and clear the Norwegian Sea of Nato warships.

To attack reinforcement convoys crossing the Atlantic.

To support the flanks of Soviet ground forces.

Adm Sir James Eberle, director of Chatham House, the Royal Institute for International Affairs, and formerly one of Nato's top three commanders as C-in-C Channel, believed the Russian Navy was now able to embark on an offensive strategy and make an all-out attack on Nato warships with its submarines.

Once Nato's warships had

been destroyed and reinforcement convoys crossing the Atlantic, whose unloading would in any case be delayed by minelaying in British and West European ports, could be sunk at leisure.

Russian submarine production not only far outstripped that of the West but had overtaken Hitler's U-boat production at its peak in 1944, and he was particularly worried that before long the Russians would have a submarine launched ballistic missile for use against surface ships.

## To Impress Kremlin

Dr Norman Friedman of the Hudson Institute of New York, said that the increased emphasis in anti-ship missiles in the latest Russian warships showed they were thinking in terms of wars in the Third World.

There were indications that last September's world-wide Russian naval exercises (which the Ministry of Defence in London denies took place) appeared to be designed to impress the Kremlin with the Navy's capabilities to offset the political influence the Red Army was achieving in Moscow with the war in Afghanistan.

There were also clear signs that the Russians now understood the significance of the latest Western naval technology which was why he believed they had begun fitting such things as sonars, towed, on cables astern of their submarines, something Western submarines have had for some years.

Air Marshal Sir John Curtiss, who before his retirement commanded RAF operations in the Falklands conflict, said that Russian aircraft now had sonobuoys for submarine detection fully comparable to those in the West though it was less clear how well their aircraft computers could process such information.